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BEFORE THE MICHIGAN HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS AND ELECTIONS  
HEARING ON HB 4284  
JULY 15, 2009

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 4284. As you know, this Bill repeals the current onerous and inefficient requirement for annual affirmative consent for political contributions through payroll deductions. The annual affirmative consent requirement is inefficient, costly and time consuming. It creates additional and unnecessary barriers for citizens who wish to become politically involved. Eliminating the annual affirmative consent requirement will streamline the ability for citizens to make contributions while substantially reducing transaction costs for both the citizen and the recipients of contributions. I anticipate that eliminating this requirement will also pose little, if any, negative effect on those who wish to opt out of perpetual donations.

Promoting an efficient and accurate contribution process:

Michigan law currently requires any individual who is contributing to a fund to provide affirmative consent at least once every calendar year using a written form. Although it may seem like this does not create a substantial burden on the contributor or the recipient fund, the law requires the exchanging of paper every year, even if no changes are made to an individuals' contribution. This is inefficient. Without the affirmative consent law would-be contributors need only sign up once and are not forced to essentially "re-declare" their support on an annual basis. Instead, under HB 4284, if the contributor changes their mind then a simple one-time cancellation would terminate the automatic donation.

Reducing costs:

The affirmative consent requirement forces entities seeking contributions through automatic payroll deductions to spend time and money on making sure the current contributors submit a consent form annually. These cards often contain no new information and are entirely perfunctory. Eliminating the requirement will eliminate the wasteful costs of producing and collecting the cards containing the annual written consent.

Little, if any, negative effect:

The only conceivable negative effect under this law is the possibility that individuals who do not wish to participate in an automatic payroll contribution may forget to cancel their contribution. This problem is unlikely to occur. Particularly in these difficult economic times, our working citizens pay close attention to their paycheck. An unwanted contribution will be cancelled quickly once the donor no longer intends to contribute. Furthermore, the Secretary of State has the option to promulgate a rule to require the recipient of the automatic contribution to annually notify the contributor of their continued enrollment. Such a notice would be much more efficient and inexpensive when compared to the current campaigns to garner annual affirmative consent and could easily be done via email or a notice on the payroll stub.

Thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in support of House Bill 4284.